

Issue NE-CW1005, released March 7, 2005, by the Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA . For more information contact us at: 100 Centennial Mall North, Suite 298, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-437-5541, e-mail at nass-ne@nass.usda.gov, Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.

Agricultural Summary: For the month of February 2005, minimal moisture received in the western two-thirds of the state continues to be a concern for dryland producers, according to the USDA's Nebraska Agricultural Statistics Service. The months open weather allowed cattle on stock fields to fully utilize the grazing potential. The major wheat producing areas of the state continued to be rated in severe drought. Producer activities included livestock care and spring planting preparations.

This release is based on reports and data from FSA county directors, county extension educators, NOAA, and the High Plains Climate Center. Current county specific comments plus current and historic PDF files of Weather and Crop reports can be found at: http://www.nass.usda.gov/ne/cropwthr/cmts_cur.htm

Weather Summary: February temperatures averaged mostly above normals during the month with temperatures 12 degrees above normals during the first week. The eastern third of the state received above normal precipitation occurred during the month, with amounts up to 3.5 inches in the southeast. No snow cover was reported as of the end of February.

Field Crops Report: Wheat condition rated 0 percent very poor, 2 poor, 38 fair, 48 good, and 12 excellent. This rating is above a month ago, but remains well above last year's condition of 36 percent good or excellent. With soil temperatures above a year ago, greenup was evident in some southern fields. **Hay and forage** supplies were mostly adequate statewide.

Livestock, Pasture, and Range Report: Cattle and calves condition rated 8 percent fair, 71 good, and 21 excellent. Calving was 31 percent complete. February weather has been open and allowed grazing of stalk fields with limited supplemental feeding.

The following are comments from Nebraska's FSA County Executive Directors and County Extension Educators:

NORTHWEST

CHEYENNE/BANNER/KIMBALL: Moisture levels are low enough and producers are finally able to pick up their swathed proso millet from last fall and combine it. Quality is fair.

NORTH CENTRAL

HOLT/BOYD: Moisture conditions are the largest concern. We will need good moisture in March and April if we are to have pasture and a hay crop.

NORTHEAST

ANTELOPE: Most 1st calf heifers have calved. Producers are just starting calving with the older cows. No unusual problems have been noted with calving. With no snow cover and mild temperatures forage supplies are good to excellent. Producers are moving and selling grain due to price increases on soybeans and a smaller level on corn. Some problems have been noted with stored corn.

CEDAR: No snow cover in the county. Livestock are in good condition with farmers feeding hay and silage to cows. Plenty of hay in the county with limited amounts needing to be fed.

DIXON: Weather conditions have been mild, warmer than normal, precipitation has been average to below. Field activities involve moving manure to the fields and spreading. Seed delivery has begun for some areas. Producers are taking advantage of the open winter to clean out feedlots and livestock buildings where possible. Making improvements on facilities and preparing equipment for spring field work. Conditions for livestock remain good to excellent.

CENTRAL

DAWSON: Dry weather continues. Some stalk shredding is beginning. We continue to push limited tillage. Most bankers tell me that they cannot pencil a positive cash flow for customers under the current prices and input costs. New calf crop looks good.

EAST

DODGE: The weather has been mild, good conditions for calving. If the weather stays nice there may be some field work done. Producers are getting equipment ready for spring work.

YORK: No field work done in February. Good weather for calving. Weather since February 14th has been dry. No strong winds. Seasonably mild temperatures. Snow from early February is gone. New center pivots are still being installed.

SOUTHWEST

FRONTIER: The weather conditions were very mild for February. Calving is going very good and the feed supplies seem to be holding up.

HAYES/HITCHCOCK: Above normal temperatures have wheat fields greening up and has made calving easier for cattlemen. Need moisture!

SOUTH CENTRAL

FURNAS: The warm temperatures are making calving very nice. The calves and cows are doing well. Calving losses are light, and feed supplies are very good. Most of the winter wheat is very good at this time.

HARLAN: The moisture situation is encouraging for pastures for the start of grazing. The cattle in stalk fields are ready to find green to eat. It will be 60 days before normal grazing time. Caring for livestock and calving are the main items going on outside. Many producers are busy in the shop getting ready for tillage and planting.

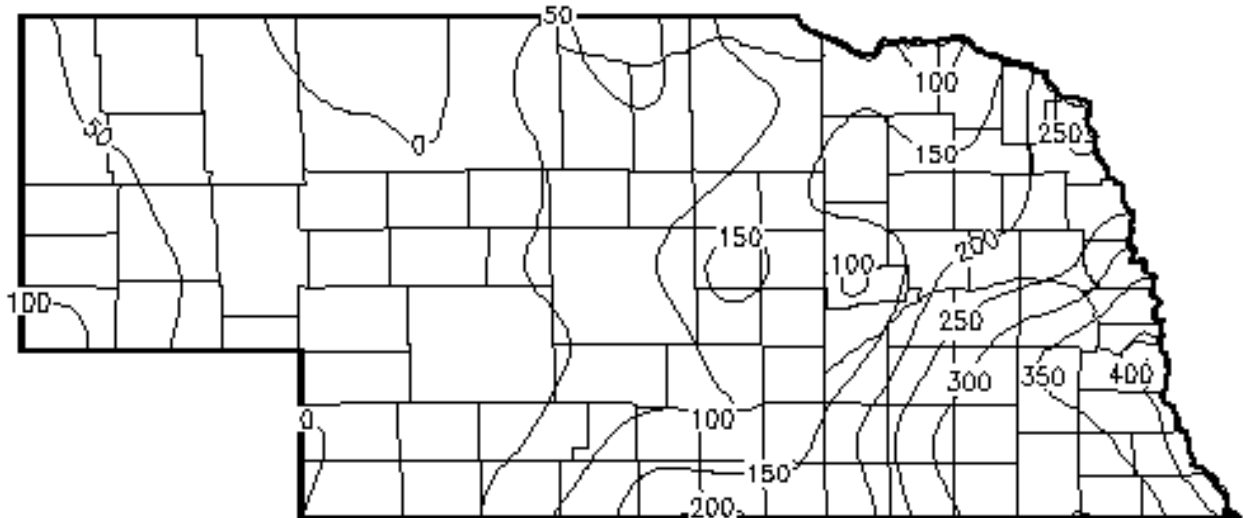
WEBSTER: Even with the earlier precipitation, the ground is getting dried out again. Hopefully there will be more rain to come before spring planting. Cattle seem to be doing good with the warm open spring for calving. Saw some producers fertilizing and cutting stocks this past weekend.

SOUTHEAST

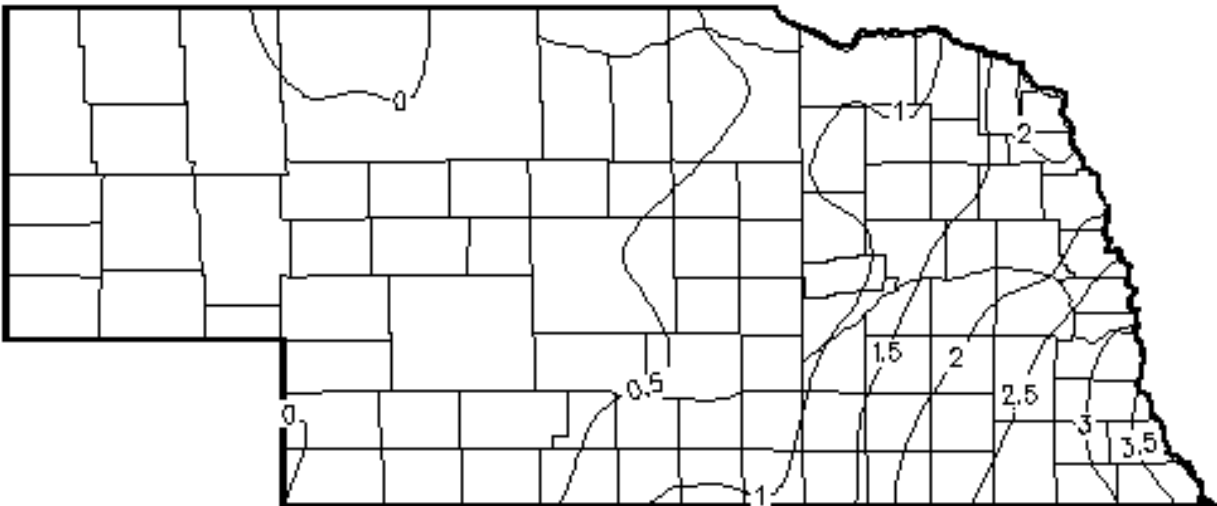
JEFFERSON: Good weather for calving. Producers are starting to fertilize.

RICHARDSON: Nice rains were received in February which was very welcome. The county is still very dry and is in need of moisture prior to spring planting. Calving is going well with good weather conditions. Some field work is being done with fertilizer and lime being applied.

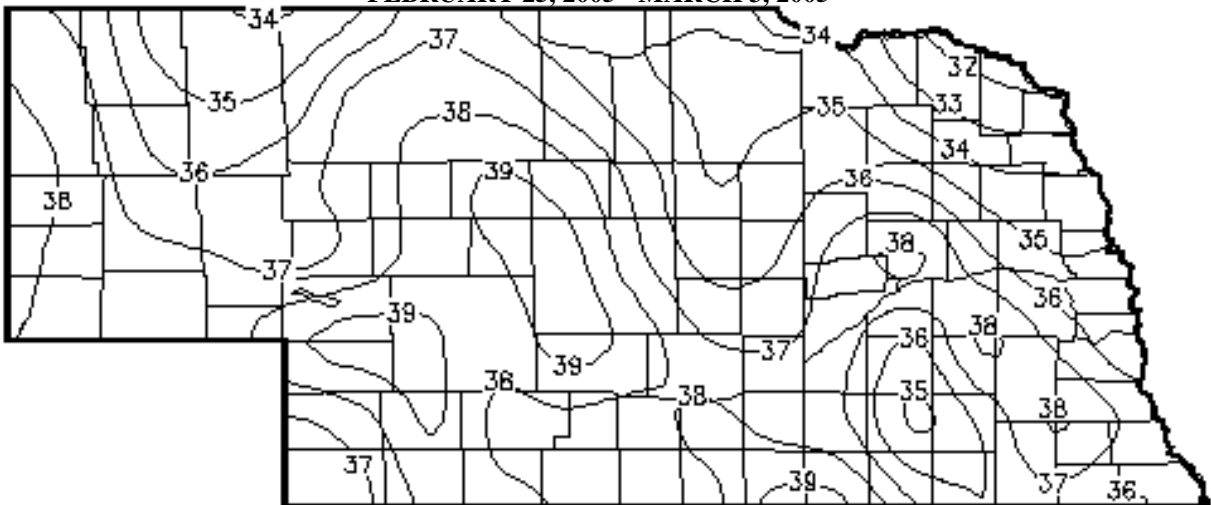
PRECIPITATION AS PERCENT OF NORMAL FOR FEBRUARY 2005¹



PRECIPITATION IN INCHES FOR MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2005¹



SEVEN DAY AVERAGE TEMPERATURE AT THE FOUR INCH DEPTH UNDER BARE SOIL
FEBRUARY 25, 2005 - MARCH 3, 2005¹



¹ Source: High Plains Regional Climate Centers Automated Weather Data Network (AWDN).